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GRAYLE,  
THE  
NEW  
DETECTIVE.

By Jack Lancaster.

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OF  
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EVERY  
WEDNESDAY.

COUSIN ETHEL'S  
SCHOOLDAYS.

A TALE OF TOM MERRY'S CHUM.

By Martin Clifford.

THE  
LAND OF THE BLACK.

A Story of Wonderful Adventure.

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TO  
SHOULDER.

By The Editor.

THE  
'PANTHER'S' MAN HUNT.

A Splendid Detective  
Story.

By Jack Lancaster.



## CHAPTER I.

The Five Fingers' Warning.

"GOOD-NIGHT, Mr. Grayle. As I told you, I have already placed the matter in the hands of Scotland Yard, but experience has taught me to trust but little to the sagacity of some of our police, excellent fellows though they undoubtedly are. It is in you, Mr. Grayle, that I am putting all my trust."

"I hope you will have no cause to regret it," Gordon Grayle returned, with a pleasant smile.

(P.T.O. to Page 2.)



# I AM INNOCENT!



Something Quite New and Interesting for "Empire" Readers.

# COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOLDAYS

A TALE OF TOM MERRY'S CHUM

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD

## CHAPTER 1.

Off to School.

**E**THEL CLEVELAND stood in the open doorway, looking out. There was a touch of frost in the air; the wind was crisp and keen. It brought the colour into Ethel's cheeks. She made a charming picture as she stood there, framed in the doorway, though she was quite unaware of the fact—a picture of bright English girlhood, with her bright eyes, soft round cheeks, and little, graceful figure.

But there was a shade of seriousness upon the young girl's brow. Ethel was leaving home—leaving for school. She was waiting there for the vehicle that was to convey her to the station.

She looked as she felt, serious and thoughtful. Her lines had hitherto fallen in pleasant places—her young life had been a happy one—not that she had been wholly without troubles. Her father's death—she could faintly remember that—and of late, her mother's ill-health, had cast a shadow upon the house. But, happy or not, the old life was ending now—ending to-day. Her mother had been ordered abroad for her health, and Ethel was going to a boarding-school.

A new life, full of possibilities, lay before her. What would St. Freda's be like? What would the girls be like, and Miss Penfold, the principal? Would she be anything like little Miss Prynne, the governess who had hitherto had the charge of Ethel's education? If so, the girl thought, with a smile, she would get on very well at St. Freda's. For little Miss Prynne was Ethel's devoted slave, and everything that Ethel did was right in her eyes, and had not Ethel been really a sensible and willing pupil, her education would have been in a parlous state.

Mrs. Cleveland was gone—she had left for the south the day before. There was nothing now to hold Ethel to her home, and she was anxious to leave for St. Freda's. Miss Prynne was to take her there—or, rather, as a matter of fact, Ethel Ethel was Miss Prynne there, for Ethel was always the guiding mind of the two. What would St. Freda's be like? Ethel knew girls who were at boarding-schools, but she had only a vague idea what they were like, and at St. Freda's she did not know a soul. As a matter of fact, Ethel knew more of boys' schools than of girls' schools, for she had a cousin at a public school in Sussex, and had often visited St. Jim's for the cricket and football matches—when Arthur and Augustus D'Arcy, her cousin, and very proudly walked his pretty cousin round the old school, and shown her off to the admiring and envious eyes of the other fellows. Ethel was "Cousin Ethel" to a great many boys chums at St. Jim's. If St. Freda's were like St. Jim's, she would like it immensely; but—

What would it be like? "Ethel!"

The girl, absorbed in her thoughts, did not hear the small, piping voice. She was looking out into the gardens, deep in a reverie.

"Ethel!"

Little Miss Prynne came along the hall, and Ethel started, and looked round. Miss Prynne was fair and forty, if not fat, and she was about the same height as her pupil. Miss Prynne looked very prim and neat and orderly. She had a little bag in her hand, and a carefully-rolled umbrella hooked on her arm. There was a sound of wheels outside just as Miss Prynne came to the door.

"You are quite ready, Ethel?"

The girl nodded.

"Quite ready, dear."

"Here is the trap. James, pray be very careful with those boxes—especially with the hat-box."

Two minutes more, and the trap was howling down the lane, and the wind was blowing Cousin Ethel's fair curls back from her face, and bringing the scarlet into her cheeks.

The girl's eyes sparkled. But her spirits were not high. There was a slight cloud on the fair brow, a slight drooping of the pretty little mouth.

Ethel was feeling lonely. She was going out into a new world—alone. If only she had had some companion—someone with whom to exchange conjectures and confidences! There was Miss Prynne, but Miss Prynne, though kindness itself, was not exactly the confidante Ethel wanted. Miss Prynne's conversational abilities extended very little beyond "Yes, dear," and "No, dear."

Ethel thought of her cousin Arthur. He had told her that he would get leave from St. Jim's if he could, and see her on the journey to St. Freda's. But evidently he had not been able to come.

Ethel sat very silent. Miss Prynne, who was in a state of mental perturbation, wondering whether her hat-pins were fastened securely enough to resist the strong wind, was not in a mood for conversation, either.

In the lane, a lad in uniform was plodding along slowly towards Cleveland Lodge. He stopped at sight of the trap, and began waving his arms frantically.

It was the telegraph-boy from the village. The trap stopped at once. The lad came up to the side of the vehicle, touching his cap. He had a telegram in his hand.

"For Miss Cleveland, mum."

Cousin Ethel took the telegram. The colour wavered in her cheek for a moment. The thought was in her mind that it might be from her mother—that it might mean that something was wrong.

She opened it hastily. Then, as her eye ran quickly over the message on the strip of paper within, she smiled. Miss Prynne was looking at her anxiously.

"What is it, Ethel dear?"

Ethel laughed.

"It's from Arthur—the dear boy!"

She handed the telegram to Miss Prynne. The little governess adjusted her black-rimmed glasses, and read:

"Dear Ethel—I've got leave, and I shall be at Wayland Junction to meet you. Look out for me."

"ARTHUR."

It was from Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's.

Miss Prynne smiled.

"It is very kind and thoughtful of him, Ethel dear."

"Yes, isn't it?"

The trap howled on again.

Cousin Ethel's face was brighter now, and her eyes were sparkling. She looked very cheerful when she took her seat in the train with Miss Prynne opposite.

And as the train approached Wayland Junction, needless to say Cousin Ethel was looking out of the window, and as soon as the train entered the station, she caught sight of a group of juniors standing on the platform.

## CHAPTER 2.

Cousin Arthur.

**B**AT Jove!"

"Hallo!"

"That's the twain!"

It was Arthur Augustus D'Arcy who spoke. Arthur Augustus, the swiftest of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's, was looking a perfect picture. Nothing could have exceeded the elegance of the cut of his tunic, unless it was the beautiful pattern of his waistcoat, or the

glossiness of his silk hat. From his little boots to his gold-rimmed eyeglass, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy was elegance itself. The two other fellows wore school caps, which showed off D'Arcy's glossy topknot to the best advantage.

The two were Tom Merry, of the Shell Form, and Figgins, of the Fourth. There were many juniors at St. Jim's, who had been eager to do him justice, was willing to bring them. But only two had been able to obtain leave, and those two were Tom Merry and Figgins.

Tom Merry looked very handsome and tidy, as he usually did; but Figgins was more than usually elegant. Figgins was, as a rule, careless in his dress, and his neckties had always offended the vision of Arthur Augustus. But on an occasion like this, Figgins could come out strong. Figgins was in his Sunday best, and his necktie was only a little on one side, and his boots shone with a polish almost as aggressive as that of D'Arcy's silk hat.

Figgins had hesitated long between a cap and a topknot, and finally, the other being impatient, had rushed off in a cap. He pleaded, in answer to D'Arcy's remarks on the subject, that it was more comfortable, and that Miss Cleveland would not be in the least likely to notice what he was wearing. An argument at which Arthur Augustus took the liberty of sniffing.

As the train came into the station, Figgins turned pink, and then crimson. He caught Tom Merry by the shoulder, and the Shell fellow turned and looked at him, with considerable surprise as he noted the changing hues of Figgins's countenance.

"Hallo! Anything up?" he asked.

"I was going to—to ask you—"

"Go ahead!"

"Is my necktie quite straight?"

Tom Merry grinned.

"Well, about as 'straight as I always is," he replied.

"Oh, come," said Figgins warmly, "you might tell a chap how it looks! Is it on one side?"

"Yes, I'm afraid it is, a little," said Tom Merry, cocking his eye thoughtfully at the necktie.

"Well, which side? Quick, the train's coming in!"

Left.

Figgins put up his hand to the necktie, and gave it a drag to the right.

"Is that all right?" he asked hastily.

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

"Bai Jove, it's all right, and no mistake," said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, turning his gold-rimmed monocle upon the necktie. "Wathah too much wight, I should say."

"Too much to the right?" asked Figgins anxiously.

"Yass, wathah!"

Figgins gave the troublesome necktie a drag back to the left, and it came undone, and the ends streamed out in his hand.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Figgins glared.

"You cackling duffers—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here—"

"Sowwy! I've got to look atfah my cousin," said D'Arcy, and he stepped towards the train, which had now stopped alongside the platform.

Cousin Ethel was waving her hand from the window.

The three juniors lifted hat and caps, and ran towards the carriage. Figgins made a hasty effort to clutch his necktie into place, but naturally without success. Tom Merry tore open the door of the carriage, but it was Arthur Augustus who extended a graceful hand to assist the ladies to alight.

Cousin Ethel smiled brightly at the juniors.

"I am so glad to meet you here," she said softly. "I was feeling very lonely."

"The pleasuah is on our side, deah boy—I mean deah gal," said Arthur Augustus. "With your permish, we are goin' to see you as fah as St. Freda's."

"Have you leave for so long?"

"Yass, wathah."

"Then I shall be delighted, of course."

"It will be ripping," said Figgins eagerly, as Cousin Ethel's glance turned upon him. Then he coloured to the hue of a beetroot. His necktie was streaming over his waistcoat, and Cousin Ethel's eye had involuntarily rested upon it.

"A—ah slight accident," murmured Figgins. "I—I—"

"It was so kind of you to come and meet me," said Cousin Ethel, apparently not noticing Figgins's confusion, and thereby putting him more at his ease. "I think my boxes ought to be taken out of the luggage-rack."

"I'll see to it!" exclaimed Figgins eagerly, and he rushed off.

The boxes were already on the platform, and the train was, about to move on. Figgins paused where the boxes lay to tie his necktie. In the looking-glass of an automatic machine he got it straight at last.

Cousin Ethel had to change trains at Wayland, and she had to wait ten minutes. Figgins saw the boxes placed upon a trolley and trundled off to another platform for the St. Freda's train, and then he returned to the group.

Tom Merry had lifted a little bag out of the carriage, and an umbrella neatly folded. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy stretched out his hand for them.

"Thank you, Tom Mewwy."

"Nothing to thank me for," said Tom Merry blandly.

"I am goin' to cawwy them."

"Rats!" said Tom, in an under-



"As your eldah," resumed D'Arcy, "I should wegard it as my duty to look atfah you."

tone, Cousin Ethel being for a moment occupied in helping Miss Prynne to adjust her veil, and having no eyes for the juniors.

Arthur Augustus jaunted his monocle into his eye, and stared frigidly at his companion.

"Weally, Tom Mewwy—"

"More rats!"

"I am goin' to cawwy my cousin's bag and umbrellah."

"You're jolly well not."

"I insist."

"You can jolly well insist till you're black in the face!" said Tom Merry warmly. "But I'm jolly well going to carry them, so there!"

"Look here, Tom Mewwy—"

"Scat!"

"I wefuse to do anythin' of the sort. I'm goin' to cawwy that bag, and I insist upon your immediately handin' it ovah to me."

"I tubbish!"

"I decline to have my remarks chawacterised as wubbish. I should be sowwy to have to thrash you in the pweeness of a lady, but—"

"You'd be jolly sorry for yourself if you began."

"Look here, you boundah—"

"Look here, you ass—"

"Give me that bag!"

"Rats!"

Arthur Augustus took hold of the bag. Tom Merry did not let go. It looked like a tug-of-war for a moment.

"I twust, Tom Mewwy, that you

will not attwact Ethel's attention by a scene of unseemly dispute," said Arthur Augustus.

"I'm going to carry this bag."

"Pway don't be an obstinate ass."

Arthur Augustus gave a jerk. Tom Merry gave a jerk, too, and jerked the bag away from the grasp of Arthur Augustus. The swell of St. Jim's gave him a wrathful glare through his eyeglass.

"You uttali wottah—"

"Cave!"

Cousin Ethel was looking round. Perhaps she had caught a tone of the suppressed but wrathful voices. The train was gliding out of the station, and Miss Prynne gave a sudden cry.

"My bag!"

"Your bag, dear!" said Ethel.

"Yes! Oh, dear! I have left it in the carriage—and my umbrellah!"

"Oh, no, you haven't!" exclaimed Cousin Ethel. "Tom has them—see?"

Miss Prynne gave a little gasp of relief.

"Oh, thank you so much, my dear boy—you shall carry them, if you like! How very thoughtful of you to take them out of the carriage!"

Tom Merry looked at Miss Prynne, and then at the bag and umbrellah he had burdened himself with. Arthur Augustus D'Arcy smiled into space.

"You can have them, if you like," murmured Tom Merry, sotto voce.

D'Arcy shook his head.

"Not at all, deah boy; I wouldn't wob you for anythin'!"

"Look here—"

"I wouldn't depwive you of the pleasuah of cawwyin' Miss Prynne's bag and umbrellah for worlds, deah boy!" Arthur Augustus assured him.

And he smilingly escorted the two ladies across the platform, while Tom Merry followed with the bag and the umbrellah.

## CHAPTER 3.

The Escort.

**A**RTHUR AUGUSTUS D'ARCY looked at his watch.

"There's another seven minutes before your twain goes, Ethel," he remarked, "and it's not in the station yet. I wathah think that the buffet is the cowwect capah."

"Yes, rather!" said Figgins, joining them. "Miss Cleveland must be awfully unger. I remember the time I first went to school—I was awfully downhearted till I had a feed at the buffet, and then I felt all right."

Cousin Ethel smiled.

"Perhaps I could eat a bun," she said meditatively.

"This way, deah boy—I mean deah gal," said D'Arcy.

And he led the way.

In a minute more, Cousin Ethel and Miss Prynne were sitting at a little table, upon which a grinning waiter deposited pile after pile of pastry of the most indigestible appearance.

In the innocence of their hearts, the juniors wanted to comfort Ethel as they themselves might have been comforted.

If Ethel had eaten a tenth part of what was affectionately pressed upon her Miss Penfold would certainly have recovered an invalid at St. Freda's that day.

But Ethel didn't.

She smilingly accepted cake and tart, and nibbled, thus pleasing the juniors without incurring any serious consequences to herself.

Miss Prynne accepted a little dry toast, astounding the boys thereby. How anybody could eat dry toast, when there were jam-tarts in abundance, was a problem that Tom Merry & Co. did not attempt to solve.

"Another tart, Miss Ethel?" said Figgins.

Ethel laughed.

"No, thank you, Figgins!"

"A cream-puff!"

"Oh, no!"

"Bettah twy these cweam-tarts," said D'Arcy. "I can assure you that they are weally wippin'!"

"Thank you, no!"

"Then I'll tell the waitah to bring some ices."

"Just one ice," said Tom Merry.

And Cousin Ethel assented.

"Well, just one."

The ices were disposed of, and there was a clatter in the station as the train came in.

Figgins took a last surreptitious look into a mirror to ascertain that his tie was still straight, and the party left the buffet.

Tom Merry found corner-seats in a first-class carriage for Cousin Ethel and Miss Prynne, and the famous bag and umbrellah were restored to the little governess.

Cousin Ethel and Dolores again next Wednesday.

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(Continued from page 5.)

The three juniors entered the carriage, and Figgins closed the door and stood against it, with the amiable intention of keeping all other passengers out.

A passenger or two tried the door, and found it fast, and passed on to the next carriage. Then a somewhat stately-looking dame, dressed very quietly in dark grey, put up her hand to the door, and Figgins hesitated. It was a "lark" to keep men out of the carriage, perhaps, but with a lady it was different.

Cousin Ethel touched Figgins on the sleeve.

It was enough.

Figgins pushed open the door, and stepped back for the lady to enter.

The lady in grey stepped in, and glanced at the girl and the juniors with the most kindly expression upon her kind face.

"Thank you!" she said, in a very pleasant voice.

She sat down in the farther corner of the carriage.

Figgins closed the door again, and the train rolled out of the station. Except for the lady in grey, the party had the carriage to themselves.

"Well, this is wathah jolly!" said Arthur Augustus D'Arcy. "If I wemembah cowwectly, we have a half-hour's wun to St. Freda's. It will be wippin' havin' you for a neibbah at school, Ethel!"

"Yes, won't it?" said the girl brightly.

"We ought to get up a cwicket match, or somethin'." Arthur Augustus remarked.

"I suppose we shall see you pretty often, you know. Do you know what the principal is like?"

"Miss Penfold? No; I have never seen her," said Ethel thoughtfully.

"But I have heard that she is very kind and good."

"Good! I suppose she will wogard it as the wupwah capah for your cousin to come oval and see you pretty often?"

Cousin Ethel laughed.

"I don't know."

"I shall wogard it as my duty to keep an eye on you, you see," explained Arthur Augustus, in the most fatherly manner.

"As your eldah."

"But you are only a few weeks older than I am, Arthur."

"That is a twiffin' mattah. You must wemembah that boys have so much more experience and knowledge of the world than gals," said D'Arcy.

"I don't want to blow my own trumpet, of course, but I am generally considahed a fellow of tact and judgment. I look atfah all these chaps at St. Jim's."

"My hat!" said Tom Merry.

"Weally, Mowwy."

"It's a little weakness of Gussy's to imagine that he locks after people," explained Figgins.

"As a matter of fact, he's a trial to us."

"Weally, Figgins."

Cousin Ethel smiled. She knew the little ways of her elegant cousin very well.

As a matter of fact, Ethel was far more capable of looking after Arthur Augustus than the swell of St. Jim's was of looking after her. But Ethel was far too tactful to ever allow D'Arcy to discover the fact. Arthur Augustus was a nice boy, and Ethel wouldn't have wounded him for worlds.

"As your eldah," resumed D'Arcy.

"I should wogard it as my duty to look atfah you. And as your matah is now abowd, I think it doubly my duty to keep an eye on you, you know. In any time of stress and twouble, I twust you will come to me for advice."

"Oh, of course!"

"I should always be happy to place my experience at your service," said D'Arcy.

"I know a lot of dodges, too, about school, that I can put you up to. I wondah if you gals evel go in for japes?"

"For wewah?"

"Japes—jokes, you know—pwactical jokes. Now, if Miss Penfold turns out to be a boundah—I mean, if you don't like her, you know, and she is down on you—I should wecomend you to give her a high old time."

The lady in grey in the farther corner of the carriage looked curiously at Arthur Augustus, as if greatly interested in his remark, but the swell of St. Jim's did not observe it.

"You could put jumpin' ewackahs in her desk," said D'Arcy thoughtfully, "or it would be a good ideah to put some wats in her hatbox."

"Arthur!"

"Yaas, that would be jollay good. Of course, I shouldn't play a twick like that on a lady, as it would be unchivalvous, as a gentleman to do anything of the sort, but I suppose you wogard a mistwess as we wogard a mastah—as an object to be japed as much as poss."

"Ha, ha!"

"You see, Ethel—"

"I don't think I shall indulge in many japes at school, as you call them," said Ethel demurely.

"I think, perhaps, jokes of that kind are more suitable for boys' schools. I cannot imagine myself putting rats in a hatbox, for instance."

"It's a wathah good ideah, though, if the principal is a boundah!"

"I am sure, Miss Penfold will not be a bounder."

The lady in grey smiled, and was about to speak, apparently, for she moved her lips, but she changed her mind and remained silent.

The conversation turned to other subjects, and the juniors chatted cheerily with Cousin Ethel as the train swept on towards King's Burford, the station for St. Freda's.

It seemed to the party a very short time before the station was reached.

The train stopped at last.

Arthur Augustus assisted his cousin to alight, and Figgins—who was always more useful than ornamental—rushed off to see to the luggage.

The lady in grey descended, too, and disappeared while the juniors were placing Ethel and Miss Pryne and their various belongings in the station hack.

"Everything on board," said Arthur Augustus.

"All wight, Ethel!"

"Yes, all right, I think!" said Ethel cheerily.

"Then I suppose it's good-bye. We shall see you on the first half-holiday, Ethel!"

"Oh, yes, do!"

"Nothin' you want to ask my advice about before you go?"

"No, I think not," smiled Ethel.

"Very well."

And Ethel shook hands with the juniors one after another, and then the three lads stood in a row, hat or cap in hand, as the hack drove off to St. Freda's.

Cousin Ethel looked back, and waved her hand, till the hack passed a curve in the road, and the station and the three juniors disappeared from sight.

Arthur Augustus heaved a sigh.

"It's wult on Ethel goin' to a new school alone," he remarked.

"I wemembah the time I first came to St. Jim's. You fellows chipped me wottenly. Tom Merry wasn't there then, but the ethah boundahs were very chippin'."

"But you go about asking for it," said Figgins.

"Now, anybody but an idiot would like Cousin Ethel at once, at first sight."

"Yes, rather!" said Tom Merry heartily.

Arthur Augustus nodded.

"Yaas, wathah! I suppose you're wight as wogards Cousin Ethel."

And the three juniors went back into the station to catch their train back.

Cousin Ethel's face was very bright as the rickety old vehicle rattled along the leafy lane towards St. Freda's.

The meeting with the juniors of St. Jim's had cheered her greatly.

She did not know what St. Freda's would be like, and she was a little uncertain how she would like it—but at all events she had kind friends not far away—and that was a comfort.

The hack drove up to the great stone gateway of St. Freda's, and up the drive to the great grey stone house, and stopped.

Cousin Ethel had arrived at her new home.

## CHAPTER 4.

## A Surprise.

MISS TYRRELL, the second mistress at St. Freda's, received Ethel Cleveland at St. Freda's.

Morning classes were still going on, and Ethel caught a hum of voices from the big school-room as she came in.

Miss Tyrrell was a slim, dark-complexioned lady, with keen eyes, and a clear, incisive voice, but her look was kindly as she greeted the new pupil.

She explained to Ethel that Miss Penfold, the principal, had been out for some time, had only just returned, and would come down shortly.

Then she returned to her duties, leaving Ethel and Miss Pryne to wait till Miss Penfold came down.

It was Miss Pryne's duty to deliver Ethel safe and sound into the principal's hands before she left her.

Ethel was glad for her to stay as long as possible—the only familiar face amid strange surroundings.

Ethel sat by a window, looking out into a garden fresh and bright in its spring green.

St. Freda's was a handsome building of grey stone, standing in wide and sweeping grounds.

Ethel caught sight of a tennis lawn in the distance, with noble old elms growing beyond. A gravel path ran under the French windows of Miss Penfold's drawing-room, and along it, as Ethel looked out, came a girlish figure.

It was that of a girl of about Ethel's own age, but as dark as

Ethel was fair, with large, dark eyes and red, pouting lips. The lips were pouting very much just now, and there was a wrinkle of anger in the youthful forehead, and the eyes were very bright.

The girl passed under the windows, unconscious of the glance upon her from within, and disappeared round a curve of the building.

Ethel wondered who she was. It was evidently one of the pupils of St. Freda's, and equally evident one who was not exactly equable in temper.

Ethel was still thinking of the pretty, passionate, dark face, when the door opened, and she turned from the window.

A lady in grey entered the room.

Ethel gave a little start of surprise.

It was the lady in grey of the railway-carriage—her travelling companion from Wayland Junction.

It did not occur to Ethel for a moment who she was, the thought coming into her mind that this was doubtless the relative of some pupil of St. Freda's.

The lady in grey came directly towards her, a slight smile upon her calm, clear-cut face.

"Miss Cleveland," she said, "and Miss Pryne?"

"Yes," said Ethel wonderingly.

"And Miss Penfold."

Ethel looked dismayed.

Back into her mind rushed the talk in the carriage, and the excellent plans laid by her cousin for "japing" Miss Penfold if that lady should prove at all troublesome to her new pupil.

Ethel understood what the smile upon the face of the school-mistress meant.

Miss Penfold was remembering that conversation, too.

The girl was so embarrassed that she could not speak for a moment.

Miss Penfold shook hands with her and with Miss Pryne in the most cordial way. It was plain that she was not offended, at all events, and Ethel gained courage.

"You have seen me before," said Miss Penfold.

"Of course, you did not know me. Perhaps I should have made myself known; but, really, I was greatly amused."

Ethel blushed red.

"Dear me!" said Miss Pryne.

"I hope you will like St. Freda's," went on Miss Penfold.

"It was your cousin, I think, who was giving you good advice in the train?"

"Yes," stammered Ethel.

"He seemed to have some apprehension that the principal of St. Freda's would turn out to be what he calls a bounder."

"Oh!"

"And if that should prove to be the case, he recommended putting rats in her desk, I think."

Ethel could not speak.

"Or crackers in her desk and rats in her hatbox," said Miss Penfold thoughtfully.

"That would be rather drastic. I don't think it likely that you will ever be driven to such a desperate resource."

"Oh!"

"I think we shall get along very well," said Miss Penfold, with a smile.

"I—I am sure of it!" stammered Ethel.

"I—I am sorry—"

"Not at all. Master D'Arcy is more accustomed to boys' schools than to girls' schools, naturally, and he is not aware that jumping

crackers in a hatbox would be a little out of place at St. Freda's."

"Dear me!" said Miss Pryne.

"But you have had a long journey," said Miss Penfold.

"You must have a little refreshment, and then go to your room to rest until dinner. The pupils dine at one o'clock here, and then you will have an opportunity of seeing something of your new companions."

Ten minutes later Miss Pryne had taken her leave, with a little tear on either cheek as she parted with her charge, and Ethel threw her arms round the little governess's neck, and hugged her affectionately ere she went.

Then she was left alone in her new home.

A quiet-voiced, neatly-dressed maid showed her up to her room.

The dormitory at St. Freda's was divided into a series of cubicles, small but very cosy, so that each girl had an apartment to herself, but the whole of them were open to the glance of anyone passing along the dormitory.

Ethel was a little tired, but more excited. Miss Penfold had recommended her to lie down until dinner, but she did not feel inclined to do so.

After removing the signs of travel she walked along the row of neat little cubicles to the large window at the end of the great room, and looked out into the grounds.

She was thinking of the dark, passionate face of the girl she had seen in the garden, and wondering who she was.

A footstep behind her made her turn her head.

Ethel uttered a little exclamation.

It was the girl she was thinking about who stood before her, regarding her with an attentive and interested gaze.

## CHAPTER 5.

## Dolores.

ETHEL looked at the St. Freda's girl, and the St. Freda's girl looked at her.

Ethel was prepared to smile timidly, but the olive face did not soften, and there was no smile in the dark eyes. There was no welcome in the face, yet it was a face that Ethel liked. It was very handsome, in a Spanish way, and it occurred to Ethel that this girl had foreign blood in her veins.

"So you are the new girl?"

The stranger spoke abruptly.

Although she was certainly not more than fifteen years old, she had already assumed a manner towards Ethel as if she were ten years older than the new girl.

Ethel nodded.

"Yes," she said, a little timidly.

"You are Ethel Cleveland?"

"Yes."

"When did you arrive?"

"About an hour ago."

"You will get on here," said the dark girl abruptly.

And there was something like a sneer on the red lips.

"I hope so," said Ethel.

"Oh, you are sure to! You are the kind of girl that Miss Penfold will like. You will like the school and Miss Penfold. Bah!"

The girl made a passionate gesture.

"I hate it!"

(The continuation of "Cousin Ethel's School Days" will be given in next Wednesday's "Empire" Library, when Dolores will show her true spirit.)

## A SHORT INSTALMENT FOR MY OLD READERS.



By CHARLES HAMILTON.

## READ THIS FIRST.

Arthur Talbot, once the most popular boy at St. Kit's College, has been forced to leave the school by the machinations of his enemy, Eddred Lacy. His way, as he leaves St. Kit's at night, lies towards a certain bridge, which has been chosen as a meeting-place between Squire Lacy, an inveterate enemy of Talbot's, and Seth Black, a rascally tramp who claims to be Talbot's father. Black has a secret hold over Squire Lacy, and blackmails him constantly. "Have you got the tin?" asks the ruffian, meeting the squire at the village clock booth on the hour of ten.

[Now go on with the story.]

## Talbot to the Rescue.

"I DON'T want to be seen talking to you," muttered the squire quickly. "Someone may pass at any moment. Come here!"

"Where's the tin?"

"I have it here."

The squire's hand went into his breast-pocket, and Black heard the crisp rustle of banknotes. But at the same moment, Rupert Lacy strode down from the bridge into the black shadows of the trees at the side of the glistening river.

Black followed him impatiently. He had heard no sound, and he had put down the footstep of the squire's nervous imagination. He did not suspect as yet that the imaginary sound was an invention, designed to trick him into leaving the dim light of the bridge for the darkness under the trees.

The squire had played his part well. The ruffian had no suspicion of the desperate resolve in his breast.

"Hand it over, squire!"

"Take it!"

The squire's voice came in a sibilant hiss now, and the ruffian started back; but it was too late.

The squire's hand came out of his breast, but the banknotes were not in it. His fingers were clutching a short, heavy, life-preserver.

The weapon whirled up, and came down with a fearful blow, as the ruffian started away.

"Take your deserts, you thief!"

hissed the squire. "Take them! That is the price of your silence!"

The weapon went up again, and again it descended on the reeling ruffian; but at the same moment as he cried out Black lost his footing, and fell back heavily, and the blow hurled him fairly into the stream.

Splash! The squire muttered an imprecation. Both the blows had been terrible, but had not fallen with full force, and now the ruffian was out of his reach.

Then suddenly the squire started with terror. A face was looking down from the bridge—a face white and strained in the moonlight, with keen eyes searching the glistening water.

Lacy stared at it from the bank below in terror and amazement. Well he knew it! It was Talbot's.

Arthur Talbot, as he came up to the bridge from the direction of St. Kit's, had heard the splash in the river, and the cry—the last Seth Black had uttered.

Little dreaming of the true state of affairs, the outcast of St. Kit's knew that some human being was in danger of death, and that was enough for him to know. Someone was struggling for life in the deep

waters; and at the thought Arthur Talbot dropped his bag and his stick, and dashed on towards the bridge with a pace seldom seen off the cinder-path.

In a second or two he was on the bridge. The cry had come from above it, and Arthur Talbot leaned over the low parapet, searching the water with keen eyes for a sight of the supposed drowning man.

In that momentary glimpse Arthur knew whom it was; knew that it was the man who had brought him shame, who had helped him to ruin—the man who claimed to be his father, and lied in claiming it.

Yet not for a moment did he hesitate. The man was going to his death—if he was not dead already. But he should not perish if Arthur Talbot could save him.

Talbot put his hands together and went down from the bridge like an arrow. That the water was deep just below the bridge, that the current was swift and strong, did not deter him.

Down he went, cleaving into the deep water, down and down, and then up again to the surface, swimming with strong, steady strokes.

He had calculated well. A few moments later his hand touched

something that floated, his fingers slid along to the head, and he gripped the thick, coarse hair.

The face of Seth Black was brought well out of the water. The swift waters were singing in the lad's ears; the current was whirling him away, past banks that fled away like shadows. He did not know that a white, terrified face looked after him from the bridge—that Squire Lacy stood there, pale as death, with the anguish almost of death in his heart.

For matters, however they turned out, were beyond the reach of Squire Lacy now. The rapid current whirled the swimmer away so swiftly that he only caught a glimpse of Arthur Talbot, with Seth Black in his grip.

Talbot did not attempt to stem the current. It was doubtful if he could have done it alone unencumbered, but with Seth Black to support, the attempt would have been inevitably futile. He let himself go with the stream, swimming, and supporting the insensible man, and with a few strokes bringing himself closer to the bank.

(This fine school arrival will be continued in next week's issue of the New "Empire" Library.)